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Calcutta Weather

Temperature
Min : 23.4°C (+0)
Max : 32.9°C (+1)

Relative Humidity:
Max : 98% Min : 52%
Sunrise : 5:42 AM
Sunset : 4:59 PM
Today
Mainly clear sky.

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Salt Lake puja live on Net

SUDESHNA BANERJEE

The Balaka Sports Club idol and its image on a laptop screen during the webcast on Wednesday

When the priest performed *arati* at Balaka Sports Club's Kali Puja on Wednesday, watching him with folded hands were devotees not only from the Salt Lake BD Park neighbourhood but also across the world.

An Internet radio station based in North America called Washington Bangla Radio organised a webcast of the proceedings from the pandal of the township's oldest Kali Puja.

"Balaka has tied up with Washington Bangla Radio to provide this service. We NRIs know how painful it is to stay away from home during Durga Puja or Kali Puja. This service gives us some solace. Elderly Calcuttans who cannot go out can also watch the late-night puja if they have a broadband connection at home," said Shibashis Dutta Choudhury, a New Zealand resident who co-ordinated the uploading of the feed from two webcams from the Salt Lake pandal.

His friend Supratim Sanyal was sitting in his office in Maryland, US, making sure the webcast was happening smoothly. "I have always been interested in the technology of streaming and was toying with this idea for a long time. I am glad it has finally taken off," said Sanyal over the phone.

The 41-year-old is the founder-CEO of Washington Bangla Radio. Registered in 2008, it was featured in the November-December 2010 issue of SPAN, the inter-cultural magazine brought out by the US department of state, as one of three organisations working as a cultural bridge between the US and India.

For residents of BD Block, Dutta Choudhury and Sanyal are local boys who have made it big abroad. "But they have not forgotten their *para* puja," smiled Rana Banerjee, a member of the steering committee of the puja, now in its 39th edition.

The club even offered an e-puja facility on the site whereby if the particulars were communicated to its members, puja was to be offered in the names of NRI devotees.

Shortly before the puja was to start, Tapan Bhattacharya, the priest, was surprised to learn that the rituals he would perform would be watched across the globe. "During Durga Puja, residents thrust cellphones towards me so that their family members in faraway lands would be able to hear the *anjali* mantra. But that was not possible during Kali Puja since the time is so short. But at least they could see the puja," he said.

The webcast will not stop with the puja. Balaka has two musical nights lined up on Thursday and Friday, featuring Kailash Kher and Kunal Ganjawala, respectively. Those too will be shown live.

The organisers plan to make this an annual feature. "We will also work to improve the quality of the service," Sanyal said.

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